

Appendix D.

*Passages Relating to Rangeland Conservation found in the
General Plans of Merced, Mariposa, Stanislaus, Tulare, San
Benito, and Kern Counties*

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Merced County

In 2006, Merced County began a process to update its General Plan. A Planning Commission Review Draft was released June 2011. Below are relevant sections of the previous General Plan and then relevant sections of the Draft 2030 General Plan.

Previous General Plan

Agriculture

Objective 2. A.:

Agricultural areas are protected from conversion to nonagricultural uses.

Goal 7: Conservation of productive agricultural and other valuable open space lands.

Objective 7. A.:

Conversion of productive agricultural and other valuable rural land to urban uses is minimized.

Goal 8:

A rural environment which achieves a balance between its agricultural and other open space resource values.

Objective 8. A.:

Rural areas are appropriately designated to meet the agricultural, grazing, wildlife habitat, recreational, natural resource and other open space needs of the County.

Policies:

1. Recognize the importance of the various open space resources identified in the Open Space/Conservation Chapter as legitimate land uses in rural areas.
2. The "Agricultural" land use designation shall be utilized for non-urban lands which are recognized for their agricultural productivity as well as other open space values including recreation and wildlife.
3. The "Foothill Pasture" land use designation shall be utilized for non-urban lands which are recognized for their open space value as hilly grazing and cropland or as wildlife habitat or recreational areas.

Open Space/Conservation

The General Plan states that from open grass and marsh lands to foothill scrub oak woodlands, the County enjoys a wide variety of vegetation and wildlife. The riparian woodland vegetation is probably among the most valuable remaining in the San Joaquin Valley. The area known as the "grasslands" is especially valuable. Because much of the woodland areas of the County have been

lost to farming and grazing activities, the remaining stands of oak and other trees have a more important value.

Goal 1:

Habitats which support rare, endangered or threatened species are not substantially degraded.

Objective 1. A.:

Rare and endangered species are protected from urban development and are recognized in rural areas.

Policies:

1. Recognize as significant wetland habitats those areas which meet the definition of having a high wetland habitat value based on the Adamus methodology and based on the Army Corps of Engineers delineation method.

Goal 3:

Open space for recreation, aesthetics and protection from hazards.

Objective 3. B.:

Lands with high aesthetic value are properly managed.

Guiding Principle: "Open Space" shall mean land or water areas that are essentially either unimproved or primarily nonintensive and which are planned to remain primarily open in character. Some public recreation lands are an exception to this general description. These areas should be devoted to uses resulting in one or more of the following:

Preservation of Natural Resources- Typical uses include wildlife habitat areas, natural or unique vegetation and scenic land and unique natural resources.

Managed Production of Resources- Typical uses include mineral extraction and agricultural production.

Goals for significant wildlife areas will be to: 1) provide possible protection for designated significant habitat areas and to maintain or enhance their present value for wildlife.

2030 General Plan Planning Commission Review Draft

Guiding Principles

Agriculture- Agriculture is the backbone and essential part of Merced County's economy.

Environmental Quality- The natural resources of Merced County, including air, water, energy, wildlife, and scenery, must be protected to assure a high quality life for Merced County residents today and in the future.

Land Use Element

Agricultural and Foothill Pasture

Policy LU-2.2: Foothill Pasture Designation

Apply the Foothill Pasture land use designation on agricultural and open space lands located on the eastern and western edges of the County which are recognized for their value as grazing, cropland, and open space.

Policy LU-2.3: Land Use Activity Limitations

Limit allowed land use within Agricultural and Foothill Pasture areas to agricultural crop production, farm support operations, and grazing and open space uses.

Agricultural Element

Goal AG-2: Ensure the long-term preservation and conservation of land used for productive agriculture, potentially-productive agricultural land, and agricultural-support facilities.

Policy AG-2.4: Preservation Programs

Encourage property owner participation in programs that preserve farmland, including the Williamson Act, conservation easements, and USDA-funded conservation practices.

Policy AG-2.8: Conservation Easements

Support the efforts of public, private, and non-profit organizations to preserve agricultural areas in the County through dedication of conservation easements, and range land held as environmental mitigation.

Policy AG-2.11: Preservation Collaboration

Collaborate with landowners, cities, State and Federal agencies, colleges, universities, stakeholders, and community-based organizations to continue and expand agricultural preservation in the County.

Natural Resources Element

Goal NR-1: Preserve and protect, through coordination with the public and private sectors, the biological resources of the County.

Policy NR- 1.1: Habitat Protection

Identify areas that have significant long-term habitat and wetland values including riparian corridors, wetlands, grasslands, rivers and waterways, oak woodlands, and vernal pools, and provide information to landowners.

Policy NR-1.2: Protected Natural Lands

Identify and support methods to increase the acreage of protected natural lands and special habitats, including but not limited to, wetlands, grasslands, and vernal pools, potentially through the use of conservation easements.

Policy NR-1.3: Forest Protection

Preserve forests, particularly oak woodlands, to protect them from degradation, encroachment, or loss.

Policy NR-1.5: Wetland and Riparian Habitat Buffer

Identify wetlands and riparian habitat areas and designate a buffer zone around each area sufficient to protect them from degradation, encroachment, or loss.

Policy NR- 1.6: Terrestrial Wildlife Mobility

Encourage property owners within or adjacent to designated habitat connectivity corridors that have been mapped or otherwise identified by the California Department of Fish and Game [California Department of Fish and Wildlife] or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to manage their lands in accordance with such mapping programs.

Policy NR-1.10: Aquatic and Waterfowl Habitat Protection

Cooperate with local, State, and Federal agencies in their efforts to protect significant aquatic and waterfowl habitats against excessive water withdrawals or other activities that would endanger or interrupt normal migratory patterns or aquatic habitats.

Policy NR-1.11: On-Going Habitat Protection and Monitoring

Cooperate with local, State, and Federal agencies to ensure that adequate on-going protection and monitoring occurs adjacent to rare and endangered species habitats or within identified significant wetlands.

Policy NR-1.15: Urban Forest Protection and Expansion

Protect existing trees and encourage the planting of new trees in existing communities. Adopt an Oak Woodland Ordinance that requires trees larger than a specified diameter that are removed to accommodate development be replaced at a set ratio.

Policy NR-1.17: Agency Coordination

Coordinate with private, local, State, and Federal agencies to assist in the protection of biological resources and prevention of degradation, encroachment, or loss of resources managed by these agencies.

Policy NR-1.20: Conservation Easements

Encourage property owners to work with land trusts and State and Federal agencies to pursue voluntary conservation easements.

Scenic Resources

Goal NR-4: Protect scenic resources and vistas.

Policy NR-4.1: Scenic Resource Preservation

Promote the preservation of agricultural land, ranch land, and other open space areas as a means of protecting the County's scenic resources.

Mariposa County

The Mariposa County 20-year General Plan was adopted in 2006. It has been revised or amended seven times since then, most recently in 2010.

Land Use

Goal 5-5: Designate land areas to maintain the County's agricultural/working landscape.

Agriculture

Agriculture production is essential for the County's future. Two key issues addressed in the Agriculture Element are preserving agricultural lands and working landscape stewardship.

Preserving agricultural land- A cornerstone of the General Plan is the preservation of the working landscape and the lifestyle it supports for future generations. Agricultural lands need to be conserved.

Maintaining the Rural character of the County- There are effective programs to assist agricultural business owners in preserving their land. Some property owners have sold development rights creating “conservation easements.”

The Plan’s intent is to...maintain agriculture uses within the Agriculture/Working Landscape classification.

Goal 10-2: Avoid loss of agriculture lands in the Agriculture/Working Landscape land use classification to maintain rural character.

Goal 10-6: Preserve agriculture lands to maintain County character.

Conservation and Open Space

Open space defines much of the character of the County.

Scenic Resources

The County has an extraordinary diversity of scenic resources that contribute to the character and tourism base. The County’s scenic resources encompass its forested ridges and valleys, grasslands and rolling hills, free-flowing rivers and streams, and the historic character of its towns and settlements.

Wildlife and Vegetation

Mariposa County has long been noted for its wildlife and its diversity of plant communities and wildlife habitats. Agricultural and forest areas outside the public lands provide habitat for a variety of species.

General Plan Implementation

Goal 11-1: Conserve the natural and scenic resources, and open space lands to protect and enhance the County’s quality of life and character ensuring a viable economy.

Goal 11-4: Conserve and enhance the ecosystems, plant communities, wildlife habitats, and the inherent diversity of both plant and animal species for the recreational, commercial, aesthetic, and basic ecosystems needs.

Implementation Measure 11-4a: The County will implement a Mariposa County Environmental Conservation Program. The Program shall include development standards and programs conserving, protecting, and mitigating the impacts on: significant and sensitive habitat including wildlife migration corridors; breeding and nesting areas (as seasonally appropriate); known occurrences of special status animal species; riparian habitat around bodies of water and along watercourses and seasonal drainages; known occurrences of special status plant species; and significant and sensitive plant communities.

Land Use

Goal 5-1: Maintain the rural character of Mariposa County.

Goal 5-5: Designate land areas to maintain the County’s agricultural/working landscape.

Stanislaus County

The Stanislaus County General Plan was adopted in 1994. In 2006, the Circulation and Noise elements were updated. In 2007, the Agricultural element was updated. In 2008, the Land Use element was updated. In 2012, the Housing element was updated. Stanislaus County is in the middle of a comprehensive plan update.

Agricultural Element

Goal 2- Conserve our agricultural lands for agricultural uses

Objective Number 2.1: Continued Participation in the Williamson Act

Objective Number 2.2: Discourage urbanization and the conversion of agricultural land in unincorporated areas of the County.

Goal 3- Protect the natural resources that sustain agriculture in Stanislaus County.

Conservation/Open Space Element

The Conservation/Open Space Element of the Stanislaus County General Plan emphasizes the conservation and management of natural resources and the preservation of open space lands. The element: (1) promotes the protection, maintenance, and use of the County's natural resources, with special emphasis on scarce resources and those that require special control and management; (2) prevents wasteful exploitation, destruction, and neglect of natural resources; (3) recognizes the need for natural resources to be maintained for their ecological values as well as for their direct benefit to people; (4) preserves open space lands for outdoor recreation including scenic, historic and cultural areas.

Goal 1- Encourage the protection and preservation of natural and scenic areas throughout the County.

Policy 1- Maintain the natural environment in areas dedicated as parks and open space.

Implementation Measure

2. Continue to use Williamson Act contracts as a means for open space conservation.

Policy 3- Areas of sensitive wildlife habitat and plant life (e.g., vernal pools, riparian habitats, flyways and other waterfowl habitats, etc.) including those habitats and plant species listed in the General Plan Support Document or by state or federal agencies shall be protected from development.

Policy 4- Protect and enhance oak woodlands and other native hardwood habitat.

Goal 3- Provide for the long-term conservation and use of agricultural lands.

Goal 4- Provide for the open-space recreational needs of the residents of the County.

Goal 10- Protect fish and wildlife species of the County.

Policy 30- Habitats of rare and endangered fish and wildlife species shall be protected.

Tulare County

The information below is from the General Plan 2030 Update.

General Plan Framework Component

Framework Concepts

Concept 1: Agriculture- One of the most identified assets in Tulare County is the rich agricultural land on the valley floor and in the foothills. The General Plan identifies agriculture not only as an economic asset to the County, but also as a cultural, scenic, and environmental element to be protected and to insure that the utilization of these resources may continue to economically succeed.

Concept 2: Land Use- Tulare County has a number of unincorporated communities that will grow and develop and natural resource lands (agriculture, mineral extraction, and open space) will be preserved...The County will utilize its goals and policies to guide the conversion of agricultural and natural resource lands to urban uses.

Concept 3: Scenic Landscapes- The scenic landscapes in Tulare County will continue to be one of its most visible assets. The Tulare County General Plan emphasizes the enhancement and preservation of these resources as critical to the future of the County. The County will continue to assess the recreational, tourism, quality of life, and economic benefits that scenic landscapes provide and implement programs that preserve and use this resource to the fullest extent.

Concept 4: Natural and Cultural Resources-As Tulare County develops its unincorporated communities, the County will ensure that development occurs in a manner that limits impacts to natural and cultural resources through the implementation of its Goals and Policies and through proper site planning and design techniques. Guiding Principles

Principle 3: Protection of Resources – Protect the County’s important agricultural resources and scenic natural lands from urban encroachment through the implementation of Goals and Policies of the General Plan.

Principle 4: Limit Rural Residential Development – Strictly limit rural residential development potential in important agricultural areas outside of unincorporated communities, hamlets, and city Urban Area Boundaries, Urban Development Boundaries (i.e., avoid residential sprawl).

Planning Framework

PF-1 – To provide a planning framework that promotes the viability of communities, hamlets, and cities while providing the agricultural, open space, scenic, cultural, historic, and natural resource heritage of the County.

PF-1.1 Maintain Urban Edges - The County shall strive to maintain distinct urban edges for all unincorporated communities within the valley region or foothill region, while creating a transition between urban uses and agriculture and open space.

PF-4 - To direct urban development within UDBs of existing incorporated cities and ensure that all development in unincorporated areas adjacent to incorporated cities is well planned and adequately served by necessary infrastructure and other public facilities and furthers countywide economic development goals.

PF-4.9 Transition to Agricultural Use - The County shall encourage cities to adopt land use policies that minimize potential conflicts with agricultural operations and other agricultural activities at the urban edge through the provision of appropriate buffers or other measures.

Prosperity Component

Prosperity Concepts

Concept 1: Agriculture - One of the most identified assets in Tulare County is the rich agricultural land on the Valley floor and in the foothills. The General Plan identifies agriculture not only as an economic asset to the County, but also as a cultural, scenic, and environmental resource to be protected.

Concept 2: Land Use - Tulare County's communities and hamlets will continue to grow and develop while natural resource lands (agriculture and open space) will be preserved. Projected population growth will require a range of housing choices, neighborhood support services, and employment-producing uses that are centrally located in communities. The County will also limit the conversion of agricultural and other natural resource lands to urban uses.

Guiding Principles

Agriculture

Principle 1: Protect Agriculture- Protect valuable agricultural uses from urban encroachment

Principle 2: Maintain Separators- Maintain rural landscape separators between Tulare County's towns and cities

Land Use

Principle 2: Urban-Rural Interface- Protect valuable agricultural and scenic natural lands from urban encroachment

Principle 4: Rural Separators- Maintain rural landscape separators between Tulare County's hamlets, communities, and cities.

Agricultural Preservation

AG-1.1 Primary Land Use

The County shall maintain agriculture as the primary land use in the valley region of the County, not only in recognition of the economic importance of agriculture, but also in terms of agriculture's real contribution to the conservation of open space and natural resources.

AG-1.2 Coordination

The County shall coordinate its agricultural policies and programs with State and federal regulations to preserve agricultural lands.

AG-1.3 Williamson Act

The County should promote the use of the California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act) on all agricultural lands throughout the County located outside established UDBs and HDBs.

However, this policy carries with it a caveat that support for the Williamson Act as a tax reduction component is premised on continued funding of the State subvention program that offsets the loss of property taxes.

AG-1.6 Conservation Easements

The County shall consider developing an Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) to help protect and preserve agricultural lands (including “Important Farmlands”), as defined in this Element. This program may require payment of an in-lieu fee sufficient to purchase a farmland conservation easement, farmland deed restriction, or other farmland conservation mechanism as a condition of approval for conservation of important agricultural land to non-agricultural use. If available, the ACEP shall be used for replacement lands determined to be of statewide significance (Prime or other Important Farmlands), or sensitive and necessary for the preservation of agricultural land, including land that may be a part of a community separator as part of a comprehensive program to establish community separators. The in-lieu fee or other conservation mechanism shall recognize the importance of land value and shall require equivalent mitigation.

AG-1.7 Preservation of Agricultural Lands

The County shall promote the preservation of its agricultural economic base and open space resources through the implementation of resource management programs such as the Williamson Act, Rural Valley Lands Plan, Foothill Growth Management Plan or similar types of strategies and the identification of growth boundaries for all urban areas located in the County.

AG-1.9 Agricultural Preserves Outside Urban Boundaries

The County shall grant approval of individual applications for agricultural preserves located outside a UDB provided that the property involved meets the requirements of the Williamson Act and the regulations of Tulare County.

AG-1.11 Agricultural Buffers

The County shall examine the feasibility of employing agricultural buffers between agricultural and non-agricultural uses, and along the edges of UDBs and HDBs. Considering factors include the type of operation and chemicals used for spraying, building orientation, planting of trees for screening, location of existing and future rights-of-way (roads, railroads, canals, power lines, etc.), and unique site conditions.

AG-1.12 Ranchettes

The County shall discourage the creation of ranchettes in areas designated Valley Agriculture and Foothill Agriculture.

AG-1.14 Right-to-Farm Noticing

The County shall condition discretionary permits for special uses and residential development within or adjacent to agricultural areas upon the recording of a Right-to-Farm Notice (Ordinance Code of Tulare County, Part VII, Chapter 29, Section 07-29-1000 and following) which is an acknowledgment that residents in the area should be prepared to accept the inconveniences and discomfort associated with normal farming activities and that an established agricultural operation shall not be considered a nuisance due to changes in the surrounding area.

AG-1.17 Agricultural Water Resources

The County shall seek to protect and enhance surface water and groundwater resources critical to agriculture.

AG-1.18 Farmland Trust and Funding Sources

The in-lieu fees collected by the County may be transferred to the Central Valley Farmland Trust or other qualifying entity, which will arrange the purchase of conservation easements. The County shall encourage the Trust or other qualifying entity to pursue a variety of funding sources (grants, donations, taxes, or other funds) to fund implementation of the ACEP.

Land Use

LU-2 - To provide for the long-term conservation of productive and natural resource lands including agricultural, foothill, mountain, and riparian areas and to accommodate services and related activities that support the continued viability and conservation of resource lands.

LU-2.2 Agricultural Parcel Splits

The County shall deny requests to create parcels less than the minimum allowed size in agricultural designated areas, unless specifically provided by Division of Land Exceptions in the Tulare County Zoning Ordinance, as may be adopted by the Board of Supervisors, based on concerns that these parcels are less viable economic farming units and that the resultant increase in residential density increases the potential for conflict with normal agricultural practices on adjacent parcels. Evidence that the affected parcel may be an uneconomic farming unit due to its current size, soil conditions, or other factors shall not alone be considered a sufficient basis to grant an exception. The RVLDP shall be the tool to determine the viability of a given agricultural parcel in the valley and its ability to be subdivided, unless specifically provided by Division of Land Exceptions in the Tulare County Zoning Ordinance.

LU-2.3 Open Space Character

The County shall require that all new development requiring a County discretionary approval, including parcel and subdivision maps, be planned and designed to maintain the scenic open space character of open space resources including, but not limited to, agricultural areas, rangeland,

riparian areas, etc., within the view corridors of highways. New development shall utilize natural landforms and vegetation in the least visually disruptive way possible and use design, construction and maintenance techniques that minimize the visibility of structures on hilltops, hillsides, ridgelines, steep slopes, and canyons.

LU-2.4 Residential Agriculture Uses

The County shall limit, to the extent allowed by law, residential development of lands designated for agricultural use. Only residences needed to support farming operations, agriculture, tourism, and agricultural support services shall be allowed.

Environment Component

Environmental Concepts

Concept 1: Scenic Landscapes

The scenic landscapes in Tulare County will continue to be one of the County's most visible assets. The Tulare County General Plan emphasizes the enhancement and preservation of these resources as critical to the future of the County. The County will continue to assess the recreational, tourism, quality of life, and economic benefits that scenic landscapes provide and implement programs that preserve and use this resource to the fullest extent.

Concept 2: Environmental Resources Management

As Tulare County develops its communities and hamlets, the County will ensure that development occurs in a manner that limits impacts to natural and cultural resources through proper site planning and design techniques. Development will be avoided in naturally and culturally sensitive areas wherever possible.

Guiding Principles

Scenic Landscapes

Principle 1: Scenic Resources- Protect the beauty of the County.

Principle 2: Reinvestment- Promote reinvestment in existing communities in a way that enhances livability and image.

Principle 3: Urban and Rural Interface- Encourage design and site planning of development adjacent to scenic landscapes that reflect the unique relationship between communities and rural lands.

Principle 4: Rural Landscape Separators- Plan and design communities to maintain rural landscapes as visual and physical separators.

Principle 5: New Town Impacts- Ensure that new towns or communities are planned and designed to limit their impact on scenic working and natural landscapes.

Environmental Resources Management

Principle 1: Natural Resources- Provide for the appropriate utilization of natural resources in the County.

Principle 2: Reduce Impacts- Design and plan new development to reduce impacts to natural and cultural resources.

Principle 3: Cultural Resources- Continue identifying significant cultural resources to ensure the preservation and maintenance of the heritage of Tulare County.

Principle 4: Natural Lands- Support the continued preservation of natural lands.

Water

Principle 1: Protection - Protect the supply and quality of urban, agricultural, and environmental water serving the County.

Scenic Landscapes

SL-1- To protect and feature the beauty of Tulare County's views of working and natural landscapes.

Environmental Resources Management

ERM-1- To preserve and protect sensitive significant habitats, enhance biodiversity, and promote healthy ecosystems throughout the County.

ERM-1.1 Protection of Rare and Endangered Species

The County shall ensure the protection of environmentally sensitive wildlife and plant life, including those species designated as rare, threatened, and/or endangered by State and/or Federal government, through compatible land use development.

ERM-1.2 Development in Environmentally Sensitive Areas

The County shall limit or modify proposed development within areas that contain sensitive habitat for special status species and direct development into less significant habitat areas. Development in natural habitats shall be controlled so as to minimize erosion and maximize beneficial vegetative growth.

ERM-1.4 Protect Riparian Areas

The County shall protect riparian areas through habitat preservation, designation as open space or recreational land uses, bank stabilization, and development controls.

ERM-1.5 Riparian Management Plans and Mining Reclamation Plans

The County shall require mining reclamation plans and other management plans to include measures that protect, maintain, and restore riparian resources and habitats.

ERM-1.6 Management of Wetlands

The County shall support the preservation and management of wetland and riparian plant communities for passive recreation, groundwater recharge, and wildlife habitats.

ERM-1.8 Open Space Buffers

The County shall require buffer areas between development projects and significant watercourses, riparian vegetation, wetlands, and other sensitive habitats and natural communities. These buffers should be sufficient to assure the continued existence of the waterways and riparian habitat in their natural state.

ERM-1.12 Management of Oak Woodland Communities

The County shall support the conservation and management of oak woodland communities and their habitats.

ERM-1.16 Cooperate with Wildlife Agencies

The County shall cooperate with State and federal wildlife agencies to address linkages between habitat areas.

ERM-5.15 Open Space Preservation

The County shall preserve natural open space resources through ... avoiding conversion of lands currently used for agricultural production, ... and encouraging agricultural and ranching interests to maintain natural habitat in open space areas where the terrain or soil is not conducive to agricultural production.

ERM-6 To manage and protect sites of cultural and archaeological importance for the benefit of present and future generations.

ERM-6.2 Protection of Resources with Potential State or Federal Designations

The County shall protect cultural and archaeological sites with demonstrated potential for placement on the National Register of Historic Places and/or inclusion in the California State Office of Historic Preservation's California Points of Interest and California Inventory of Historic Resources. Such sites may be of Statewide or local significance and have anthropological, cultural, military, political, architectural, economic, scientific, religious, or other values as determined by a qualified archaeological professional.

San Benito County

In 2009, San Benito County began a three-year process to update the existing General Plan. According to the County website, the draft has not yet been released. The updated General Plan will plan through 2035. The information below is from the existing General Plan, adopted in 1995.

Land Use Goals and Objectives

Goal 1- To maintain the County's rural atmosphere.

Objectives-

a) To protect prime agricultural areas in order to preserve them for the present and future agricultural production vital to the County.

Policy 6- Use available legislative means to preserve agricultural areas.

Action d) Encourage agricultural conservation easements.

Policy 33- Specific development sites shall avoid, when possible, locating in an environmentally sensitive area (wetlands, erodible soils, important plant and animal communities, archaeological resources).

Open Space and Conservation Element

Goal 1- Preservation of Natural Resources

1. To preserve natural wildlife habitats, including environmentally significant areas.
2. The protection and preservation of natural resources in the County, including prime agricultural areas, significant mineral lands, plant and animal life with emphasis on threatened or endangered species, habitat for fish and wildlife, watersheds, wetlands, and rivers.

Countywide Policies and Objectives for the Preservation of Natural Resources

1. To preserve existing plant and wildlife ecological habitats.
2. To preserve riparian habitats and valuable watersheds.
10. Develop programs to encourage the protection and re-establishment of oak hardwood resources in the County.

Policy 5 - Stimulate regeneration of oak woodland communities

Through a combination of the habitat conservation plan, inter-agency coordination, and development review procedures, the County will promote the restoration, restocking, and protection of oak woodland habitat on public and private lands in the County.

Policy 11 - Open space zoning

It will be the County's continuing policy to enact a series of zoning ordinances designed to protect the natural resources of San Benito County.

Open Space Goals, Objectives and Policies to Maintain a Rural Atmosphere

Policy 15 - Open Space overlay district

The County will enforce the intended purpose of the Open Space (Os) District of the County by using the Zoning Ordinance to protect and preserve the rural landscape and implement open space policies for public health, safety, and welfare, continued agricultural uses, scenic viewscape preservation including scenic highway corridors, park and recreation uses, conservation of natural

resources, the containment and definition of limits to urbanization, and the preservation of natural habitat for threatened and/or endangered plant and animal species.

Policy 18 - Protect rural atmosphere and natural resources

General Plan Amendments, Specific Plans, Area Plans, and Area of Special Study that result in a net increase in general plan buildout (Table 1 of the Land Use Element), shall include methods to conserve open space for natural resources including agriculture, wildlife habitat, and water (e.g., conservation easements and/or other similar resource protection measures). Proposed development areas shall also include measures to protect resources on-site and contiguous to the project with the use of clustering, conservation easements, and other similar programs.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies for the Managed Production of Resources

Goal 3 Natural Resources

To provide for the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources, including water and its hydraulic force, water quality, forests, soils, rivers and other waters, fisheries, wildlife, minerals, energy and other natural resources.

Objectives

1. Plan for the preservation of prime agricultural and open space lands while using them to help define the areas of rural residential growth.
2. Preserve the natural wildlife habitats, including environmentally sensitive areas.
4. The protection of prime agricultural areas to preserve them for present and future agricultural production vital to the County.

Policy 19 - Natural resources protection

The County recognizes the need for both conservation and development of natural resources, and recognizes that the utilization of these natural resources, if not properly managed, can lead to their loss. It will be the County's policy to protect, wherever possible, watersheds, creeks, and rivers, soil, and mineral resources through the enactment of appropriate legislative vehicles.

Policy 25 - Legislative methods to protect agriculture and rural identity.

It is the County's policy to use the Williamson Act, agricultural zoning, and legislative means, where appropriate, to preserve agricultural resources, maintain a rural identity, and to define and shape the urban form. Residential growth should be directed to where services are already provided and to the least productive agricultural lands.

Goal 6 Agricultural Resources

To continue agriculture as an industry in the County and to preserve present agricultural resources for future generations.

Policy 55 - Recreation and open space provide for recreation

It shall be the County's policy to acquire, develop, operate, and maintain a comprehensive space system of open space land uses and recreational facilities to provide for the low-intensity trails, picnicking, informal sports, park benches, and active recreational needs (sports fields for youth and adult league play) of the County population.

Public Review Draft 2035 General Plan Policy Document

Land Use Element

Goal LU-1- To maintain the County's rural character and natural beauty while providing areas for needed future growth.

LU-1.4 Identifiable Community Boundaries - The County shall strive to maintain clearly defined boundaries between all communities (e.g., cities, unincorporated communities, and New Communities) that separate them from one another by working agricultural landscapes, natural greenbelts and open space, or trails and parkland.

Goal LU-3- To ensure the long-term preservation of the agricultural industry, agricultural support services, and rangeland resources by protecting these areas from incompatible urban uses and allowing farmers to manage their land and operations in an efficient, economically viable manner..

LU-3.2 Agricultural Integrity and Flexibility - The County shall protect the integrity of existing agricultural resources, and provide for flexibility and economic viability of farming and ranching operations.

LU-3.8 Urban Residential Buffer Requirement - The County shall require a minimum 200-foot buffer between new urban density residential development (i.e., greater than two dwelling units per acre) and existing agricultural operations, and establish design/maintenance guidelines for developers and property owners.

LU-3.9 Right to Farm - The County shall protect the rights of operators of productive agricultural properties (as defined in the Glossary) to commence and continue their agricultural practices (a "right to farm") even though established urban uses in the general area may foster complaints against those agricultural practices. The "right to farm" shall encompass the processing of agricultural products and other activities inherent in the definition of productive agriculture. The County shall require all parcel maps approved for locations in or adjacent to productive agricultural areas to indicate the "right to farm" policy. The County shall require the program to be disclosed to buyers of property in San Benito County.

LU-3.11 Williamson Act Contract Non-Renewal on Small Parcels - The County shall consider not renewing current Williamson Act contracts on small parcels that are not devoted to commercial agriculture.

LU-3.12 Agricultural Viability of Small Parcel Sizes - The County shall require project applicants seeking to subdivide agriculturally-zoned parcels to demonstrate the continued viability of lots less than 40 acres for commercial agriculture operations.

LU-3.14 Land Trusts and Financial Incentives - The County shall consider land trusts and financial incentives to preserve agricultural soil resources and to protect the integrity of important agricultural areas for future use.

LU-9.10 Annexation Impacts on Adjacent Agricultural Land - The County shall encourage the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) to consider the impacts of annexations on nearby agricultural lands.

Natural and Cultural Resources Element

Goal NCR-1 - To preserve and enhance valuable open space lands that provide wildlife habitat and conserve natural and visual resources of San Benito County.

NCR-1.1 Integrated Network of Open Space - The County shall maintain an integrated network of open space lands that support natural re-sources, recreation, tribal resources, wildlife habi-tat, water management, scenic quality, and other beneficial uses.

NCR-1.2 Conservation Easements - The County shall support and encourage the use of conservation easements to protect open space that contains valuable natural resources.

NCR-1.3 Open Space Overlay District - The County shall continue to apply the Open Space Overlay District in the Zoning Ordinance to protect and preserve open space land as a lim-ited and valued resource.

Goal NCR-2 - To protect and enhance wildlife communities through a comprehensive approach that conserves, maintains, and restores important habitat areas.

NCR-2.2 Habitat Protection - The County shall require major subdivisions with-in potential habitat of Federal- or State-listed rare, threatened, or endangered plant or animal species to mitigate the effects of development. Mitigation for impacts to species may be accomplished on land preserved for open space, agricultural, or natural resources protection purposes.

NCR-2.4 Maintain Corridors for Habitat - The County shall protect and enhance wildlife migration corridors to ensure the health and long-term survival of local animal and plant popula-tions, in particular contiguous habitat areas, in order to increase habitat value and lower land management costs. As part of this effort, the County shall require road and development sites in rural areas to:

- a. Be designed to maintain habitat connec-tivity with a system of corridors for wild-life or plant species and avoiding frag-mentation of open space areas; and
- b. Incorporate measures to maintain the long-term health of the plant and animal communities in the area, such as buffers, consolidation of/or rerouting access, transitional landscaping, linking nearby open space areas, and habitat corridors.

NCR-2.5 Mitigation for Wetland Disturbance or Removal - The County shall require development to avoid encroachment on wetlands to the extent practica-ble and shall require mitigation for any develop-ment proposals that have the potential to reduce wetland habitat.

NCR-2.6 Regeneration of Oak Woodland Communities - The County shall promote the restoration, re-stocking, and protection of oak woodland habitat on public and private lands in the county through a combination of the habitat conservation plan-ning, inter-agency coordination, and updated de-velopment review procedures.

NCR-2.7 Mitigation of Oak Woodlands - The County shall encourage development near oak woodlands to be clustered to avoid, where technically or economically practical, the loss of heritage oak trees. The County shall require transitional buffers to help maintain viable ecosystems where appropriate. Where removal of trees cannot be avoided, the County shall require project applicants to prepare a mitigation plan that identifies on- or off-site tree replacement.

Goal NCR-4 - To protect water quantity and quality in natural water bodies and groundwater basins and avoid overdraft of groundwater resources.

NCR-4.4 Open Space Buffers - The County shall conserve and, where feasible, create or restore open space areas that serve to protect water quality such as riparian corridors, buffer zones, wetlands, undeveloped open space areas, and drainage canals

NCR-4.7 Low Impact Development - The County shall require new development to avoid significant water quality impacts and protect the quality of water resources and natural drainage systems through site design, source controls, run-off reduction measures, best management practices (BMPs), and Low Impact Development

Goal NCR-6 - To increase energy independence and reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the use of renewable energy sources and improved energy conservation and efficiency.

NCR-6.3 Energy Facilities - The County shall require the siting of energy facilities in a manner that is compatible with surrounding land uses and protects scenic resources.

Goal NCR-7 - To protect, preserve, and enhance the unique cultural and historic resources in the county.

Goal NCR-8 - To enhance and preserve the attractive visual qualities of scenic vistas and corridors in the county

NCR-8.1 Protect Scenic Corridors - The County shall protect the visual characteristics of certain transportation corridors that are officially designated as having unique or outstanding scenic qualities.

Kern County

The Kern County General Plan was adopted in 2004, and amended in 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009. It contains references to a 20-year planning period.

Land Use- Resource

The General plan states that the loss of valuable agricultural lands to urban development is a prime concern.

Goals:

1. To contain new development within an area large enough to meet generous projections of foreseeable need, but in locations which will not impair the economic strength derived from the petroleum, agriculture, rangeland, or mineral resources, or diminish the other amenities which exist in the County.
2. Protect areas of important mineral, petroleum, and agricultural resource potential for future use.
5. Conserve prime agriculture lands from premature conversion.

Policies:

3. The County will support programs and policies that provide tax and economic incentives to ensure the long-term retention of agriculture, timber, and other resource lands.
21. The County shall encourage qualifying agricultural lands to participate in the Williamson Act program or Farmland Security Zone program.

Land Use- General Provisions

Oak woodlands and larger individual oaks have aesthetic and historical value, provide for wildlife and game and enhance scenic values for all Kern County residents and visitors.

1.10.5 Threatened and Endangered Species Policies:

27. Threatened or endangered plant and wildlife species should be protected in accordance with State and federal laws.
29. The County will seek cooperative efforts with local, State, and federal agencies to protect listed threatened and endangered plant and wildlife species through the use of conservation plans and other methods promoting management and conservation of habitat lands.

1.10.10 Oak Tree Conservation Policies:

65. Oak woodlands and large oak trees shall be protected where possible and incorporated into project developments.
66. Promote the conservation of oak tree woodlands for their environmental value and scenic beauty.